

September 27, 2015

Mary A. Bennett
880 Hailey Court
San Marcos, CA 92078

To: Ashley Gungle, Project Planner and Peter Eichar, Environmental Coordinator for the San Diego County Planning and Development Services

Cc: Town Council of Elfin Forest Harmony Grove

To All Concerned:

I am writing to provide comments on the Harmony Grove Village South (HGVS) community project and Harmony Grove expansion projects in area between San Marcos and Escondido. I write as a Cocos fire evacuee and lucky survivor of that catastrophe. My concerns and feedback follow:

- **Road Congestion:** North County already suffers from extreme road congestion. Current residents already need to schedule errands and discretionary road trips around school and work rush hours due to road congestion, and still the traffic is often heavy. It makes no sense to add more residents who add to the traffic problems, unless builders are required to implement necessary road improvements before breaking ground.
- **Wildfire Safety Risks:** On May 14, 2014, about 3:30pm, I hurriedly grabbed my two pets and set out to evacuate my Altaire neighborhood due to the imminent threat of the Cocos fire. I drove a short distance to Wild Canyon Road, the only escape route open because the fire cut off the only other route, Double Peak Road. I found myself in a line of traffic that did not move for more than one hour. In that hour, the column of black smoke over the hill in back of the neighborhood thickened and towering flames leaped over the top. Traffic was gridlocked with many of us desperately calling 911 for rescue. For the first time in my life, I thought I was going to die. It appeared that the fast moving fire would sweep down the hill at any minute and we all would die where we sat. If the wind hadn't shifted just at the right time, I am convinced I would not be here now.

The issue of limited evacuation routes is a problem throughout the County, a problem made worse by the road congestion mentioned above. Adding more residents without remedying the traffic infrastructure will only further play roulette with human lives. Will it take a massive loss of life in a future wildfire to finally address the issue? We need more evacuation routes for the current population, not more people to evacuate.

- **Drought:** The California drought is deepening with serious concerns about water shortages for the current population throughout San Diego County. And new communities are being considered? This makes no practical sense. Not only will this put a bigger burden on the water supplies, needed by current residents, it will decrease critical supplies for firefighting.
- **Environmental Impact:** Areas of open land need to be preserved to sustain the ecology, beauty and wildlife habitats of our County. More people and more human use of the land will irreversibly damage or destroy all of these treasures.

It seems clear that those making the decisions about building the HGVS community or expanding Harmony Grove do not live in the areas impacted. Letters like this one would certainly not be necessary if they did. I suggest that before decisions are made about more building, decision makers need to drive through the impacted areas to experience the traffic and ask the locals if the issues cited above are realities. Only then will the right decision against more building be crystal clear.

Sincerely,
Mary A. Bennett
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